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COMMUNICATIONS

ENGLISH COMPOSITION IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

Editor of School Review.

DEAR SIR: I have neither time nor inclination to discuss with Mr. Horn the merits of my paper on English Composition, published in the September (1898) number of the SCHOOL REVIEW. It was not to be supposed, of course, that all readers would find the article satisfactory or would interpret rightly its spirit and purpose. In connection with Mr. Horn's criticism, however, it may not be unbecoming in me to say that I have been repaid for preparing the paper by hearty words of approval from several different states. Perhaps the most gratifying communication came from a superintendent, who, without dismissing his special teacher of English or giving up the course in rhetoric, called *all the teachers* of his high school together, went over the article with them, and succeeded in awakening in them all a more lively and abiding interest in the general use of correct and effective English. This superintendent caught the spirit and meaning of the article.

But in justice to myself, Mr. Editor, I must ask you, even at this late date, to publish my explanation concerning the three short paragraphs on page 505. They do not belong to the article at all, and of course break the connection. When I first inquired as to whether you could find space for my article, I sent a written copy of it up to the close of the paragraph ending at the top of page 505. As the article was not finished at the time, the three short paragraphs following were inclosed to give you an idea of the scope and character of the paper. Any one who is interested enough to glance at this page will see that these paragraphs simply outline the thought from the top of the page 507 on to the close. The remainder of the article was mailed to you at a later date, and when the proof was sent me, these mere outline paragraphs were printed in with the rest of the article. Not being guilty of the unconscious aberration of mind with which Mr. Horn courteously credits me, I inclosed the paragraphs in brackets and wrote the word "omit" on the margin. I was somewhat annoyed, when the article appeared, to note that my correction of proof had not been observed, and in mailing several copies of the REVIEW to my friends took pains to cross out the objectionable paragraphs. I was inclined to write you a note at the time, but did not do so finally, because it seemed but a small matter, a blemish upon the construction of the article rather than a hindrance to the interpretation of the thought. Such slips, in the busy life of an editor, are pardonable, I am sure, and are certainly not of frequent occurrence in the columns of the REVIEW.

In conclusion a single comment upon Mr. Horn's communication. "That most people *do* write altogether too *unconsciously* is readily seen from an

examination of their work. Even the paper under discussion may bear some evidence on this point," writes Mr. Horn on page 311. And then there follows a bit of just criticism upon the paragraphs which I marked in my proof to be omitted.

But if Mr. Horn will cast his eye across to page 310 of his own communication, first sentence of next to last paragraph, he will read: "The criticism made upon text-books of rhetoric *are* well merited." Has this analytic writer been led by the plural form in "text-books" to forget his singular subject, "criticism"? Or is it a bit of "*too unconscious*" composition, or possibly a slight oversight in the hasty proof reading of a busy editor?

YPSILANTI, May 15

F. A. BARBOUR

A STUDY OF HIGH SCHOOL PUPILS

Editor of the School Review:

I find that a note of comment and, perhaps, of warning, should have accompanied my paper in the SCHOOL REVIEW for April, on "A Study of High School Pupils." In speaking on this subject or in replying to letters of inquiry, I have usually elaborated, more or less, the following points:

1. We have found that the blank forms used by us are by no means ideal nor above criticism. They represent our first actual efforts, and our next edition will be modified in accordance with our experience.

2. The parents' blank, is, perhaps, too long. Some of the questions amount practically to nothing, and will be omitted hereafter. Possibly some new questions will be incorporated. We do not expect, of course, to ask the same questions over again of parents who received blanks this year, but only of parents whose children are entering school for the first time. If inquiries are made of the former it will be by means of a blank quite different and much shorter.

3. The pupils' blank in its present form is not to be used again. In the case of some of the questions no advantage would be gained by pressing them further, for we would simply get repetitions of what we already have in abundance. We feel that we have worked these leads out. In asking them we got what we were after, and certainly understand the school and ourselves better for having heard what the pupils had to say.

Probably we shall not attempt so thorough and general a questioning of pupils again. With the pupils' blank as with the parents' blank, a new and briefer form will be devised and placed before the new pupils only. If a consensus of student opinion is desired on some special phase or phases of school life special blanks can be prepared for the purpose.

4. This method of pupil study may easily be overdone. This fact should be strongly emphasized and should be bracketed with another, namely, that unless question blanks are used with the greatest care, the most cautious judgment, they may do harm, and are not unlikely to earn a merited contempt.

HILLHOUSE HIGH SCHOOL, New Haven, Conn.

MYRON T. SCUDDER

April 10, 1899.